

## Message Text

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44

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FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6358

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

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AMEMBASSY FORT LAMY

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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USCINCRD MACDILL AFB, FLORIDA

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AFDROUGHT

FROM WILLIAMS, PRESIDENT'S COORDINATOR FOR THE SAHEL DROUGHT  
RELIEF

BRUSSELS FOR USEC; PARIS FOR HELMAN; GENEVA FOR KLEIN; FROM FOR  
RODAG

E.O. 11652: ADS, DELCAS 10-1-73

SUBJ: CONTINUATION OF MALI AIRLIFT UNTIL OCTOBER 15

1. UPON THE REQUEST OF THE GOM AND AFTER AN ON-SITE ASSESSMENT  
OF NOMAD CAMPS IN GOA AND TIMBUKTU, I HAVE DECIDED TO CONTINUE THE  
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PRESENT C-130 AIRLIFT OPERATION IN MALI UNTIL 15 OCTOBER. THIS

DECISION WAS REACHED IN AGREEMENT WITH MINDEFENSE DOUKARA (GOM) DROUGHT RELIEF COORDINATOR), CHARGE D' AFFAIRES KUNIHOLM AND COL. HARP (USAF). WE CAREFULLY REVIEWED THE PRESENT SUPPLY AND TRANSPORT SITUATION IN MALI AND DETERMINED THAT WITHOUT THE AIRLIFT FOOD AND ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES, PARTICULARLY FOR THE NOMAD CAMPS, WOULD BE ALTOGETHER INADEQUATE. DUE TO LACK OF RAINFALL THE NIGER RIVER IS 1M50CM BELOW NORMAL FOR THIS PERIOD, AND NAVIGATION ON THE RIVER HAS ACCORDINGLY BEEN RETARDED MUCH LATER THAN USUAL. ONLY ONE SUPPLY BOAT HAS REACHED GAO SO FAR. BOUKARA DOES NOT BELIEVE ANOTHER ONE CAN ARRIVE BEFORE MID-OCTOBER. THE AIRLIFT IS ESSENTIAL TO BRIDGE THE GAP, PARTICULARLY SINCE THERE ARE NO FOOD SUPPLY RESERVES IN GAO, TIMBUKTU AND OTHER OUTLYING SPOTS. THE SITUATION IS AGGRAVATED BY FACT NOMAD CAMPS ARE GROWING, THE ONE IN TIMBUKTU HAVING SWOLLEN TO OVER 7,500 AND THE GAO CAMP TO OVER 5,700 WITH NEW ARRIVALS DAILY. GOM HAS INSTITUTED PROGRAM TO PATROL THE REGION AND BRING DESTITUTE NOMADS INTO CAMPS WHERE THEY CAN BE FED, TREATED MEDICALLY AND SAVED. VAST MAJORITY OF CAMP POPULATIONS ARE WOMEN AND CHILDREN, THE REST ARE ELDERLY WITH FEW MEN. UNCLEAR EXACTLY WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO MOST OF ABLE-BODIED NOMAD MEN , BUT IT APPEARS THEY HAVE GONE SOUTH TO TRY TO SAVE OR FIND ANIMALS AND THE WHEREWITHAL TO RETURN TO PICK UP THEIR FAMILIES IN CAMPS AND THEN REVERT TO THEIR FORMER WAY OF LIFE. THUS, CAMP POPULATION WITH HIGH PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN REQUIRES A GREAT DEAL OF CARE AND ATTENTION.

2. IN EXTENDED DISCUSSION WITH MINISTER DOUKARA, I POINTED OUT THAT THE COST OF CONTINUING THE AIRLIFT OPERATION FROM 1-15 OCTOBER WOULD AMOUNT TO AROUND \$250,000 AND THE FUNDS COULD BE USED FOR MORE LASTING TRANSPORT SUCH AS PURCHASE OF TRUCKS. DOUKARA STRUGGLED WITH THIS BUT CONCLUDED THAT PRIORITY HAD TO BE TO CONTINUE THE AIRLIFT BECAUSE OF THE CONDITION OF THE NOMAD CAMPS AND THE CONTINUING NEED TO ASSURE SUPPLY FOR NORTHERN COMMUNITIES. UNTIL BOATS ARRIVE ON SECOND TRIP IN MID-OCTOBER, POINTS LIKE GAO AND TIMBUKTU WOULD PROBABLY RUN OUT OF FOOD AND ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES WITHOUT EXTENSION OF AIRLIFT. I AM SATISFIED THAT MINISTER HAS ASSESSED HIS PRIORITIES CORRECTLY.

3. BELIEVE PRESENT SITUATION POINTS TO NEED FOR FEI TEAM TO REVIEW POSSIBILITY REINFORCING TRANSPORT SYSTEM TO AVOID REPETITION THIS YEAR'S COSTLY AIRLIFT REQUIREMENT. IN MALI LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUGGEST ATTENTION BE GIVEN TO IMPROVING NIGER RIVER TRANSPORT CAPABILITY AND PROVIDING STORAGE FOR PRE-POSITIONING OF FOOD IN MORTHERN COMMUNITIES.  
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